

# Disabled, Despised and Discarded

## A REPORT ON AN ABANDONED BABY

Ministry of Mercy Orphanage Lokoja will not forget a fateful morning when Ruth (as we now call her) was found all by herself in a basket by the roadside just beside the fence of our orphanage in Lokoja on April 21, 2021. She was a child of about 4 to 5 years of age. It was clearly not accidental because her being neatly packaged in a basket and quietly kept close to an orphanage was sufficient to tell the story of a well premeditated child abandonment.

A closer look revealed that she had multiple medical abnormalities with associated disabilities (at age 4-5 years she is still unable to walk or communicate). No wonder the abandonment. Her original name, tribe, family and exact age are all unknown to us. Like the Biblical Moses she was kept in a basket and there was possibly a “Miriam” not far away from her, maybe among the bystanders to watch and see how it all ended.



It was saddening enough to see little Ruth go through such a cruel abandonment so early in her life, her only crime being her abnormalities and disabilities, but more saddening is the indifference shown by the village community where she was abandoned. For several hours on end, the villagers

and other passersby kept away from her. As a result, the heat from the sun and the cold rain of the previous night took their toll on her.

At first, the orphanage was not aware of this development happening just outside the fence until one of the villagers was sent in to inform us. We saw this heart melting scenario and decided to play the Good Samaritan by offering to help. However, in helping certain societal protocols needed to be followed because the child was not exactly within our premises. We had to first notify the traditional ruler of the community and also requested him to inform the police of this situation which was within his jurisdiction, but this action of ours was greeted with a rather shockingly cold response of indifference. We were told that it was not their business but that of the orphanage.

At this point, it was beginning to look like a concerted plot to manipulate a disabled child into our orphanage – a possible connivance between the community, their leader and the family of the abandoned child. The proximity of the site of abandonment to our orphanage, the multiple medical abnormalities/disabilities and the cold response from the village were all beginning to add up.

We took a further step by informing the State Government's Ministry of Women Affairs and Social Development for their intervention but no good response was forthcoming. When the wait was getting too long, our orphanage, on compassionate grounds took it upon herself to rescue this child from exposure to the harsh weather and hired a temporary nanny to care for her at a cost of 1,000 naira per day pending when the government comes up with a substantial arrangement. We are short of caregivers in the orphanage currently, especially after recently receiving a set of very sick twins.

This is the second case of child abandonment around our premises occurring within the space of one month. The first took place at our other orphanage location in Otutulu village where a baby girl of about a week old was dropped by our gate in the early hours of March 28, 2021 by two unknown men who came on a

motorbike along Iyale–Oganenigu road. The two men fled away after hurriedly dropping the baby before our security officer could come out.



The baby looked sick and appeared not to have been fed for a long time. There were signs of severe dehydration – all the skull bones were very prominent through the scalp. Six pieces of five hundred naira notes were also kept beside the baby possibly as an attempt to clear the guilty conscience of whoever carried this act. The orphanage has taken her in where she is now part of our large family. She has received some medical intervention from our medical staff. Necessary notification has

been sent to the relevant government agencies.

God is the owner of all children, whether abandoned or not. His eyes are always on them. We are just His hands in caring for them. The society is running away from their responsibilities. The increasing incidence of child abandonment these days shows that our world is fast losing their humanness. We pray that God will arrest this trend before it gets out of hand.

Please pray for these children, and for us to know what God wants us to do per time. We also pray for more resources to offer these children adequate care.

Yours in Him,

**Daniel Adujo Edeh**

Ministry of Mercy, Nigeria Inc.

Proprietor